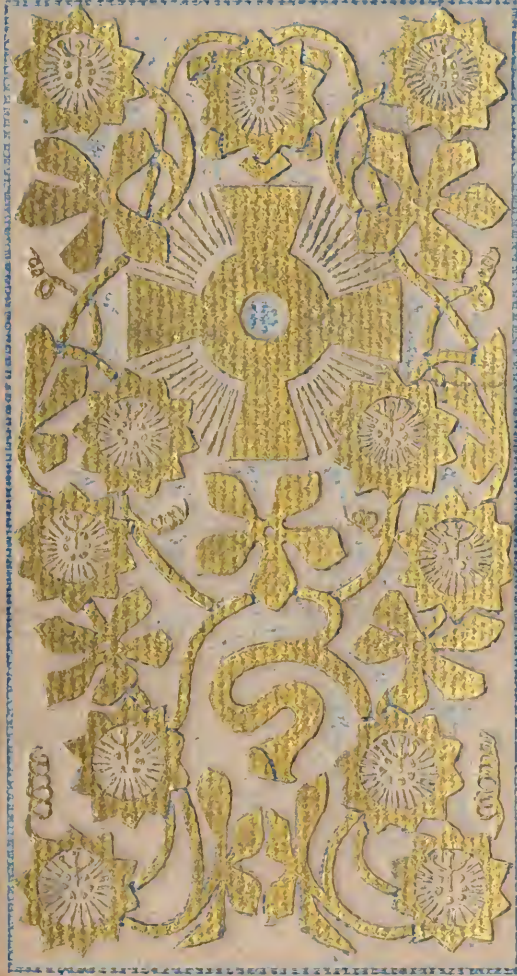


PR
5562
.R344x
1902

Ch. C. C.
R. R. R.



W. W. W.
L. L. L.

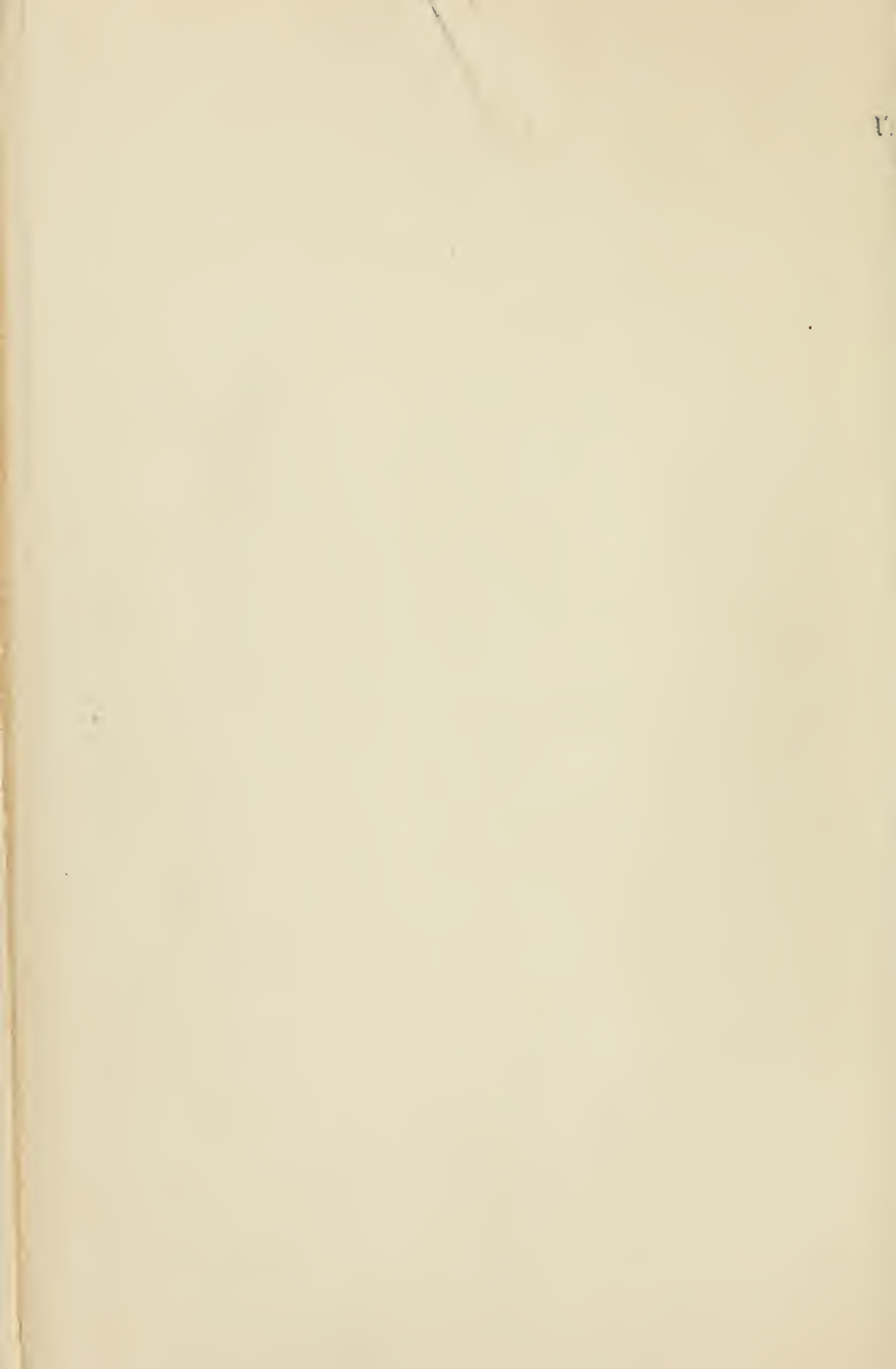
THE LIBRARY
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY.
PROVO, UTAH

135


578

100

60¢
net



THE ELEGY OF FAITH



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2011 with funding from
Brigham Young University

821.81
Bulkr

THE ELEGY OF FAITH
A STUDY OF ALFRED TENNYSON'S
IN MEMORIAM BY WILLIAM RADER



THOMAS Y. CROWELL AND COMPANY
PUBLISHERS: NEW YORK, MDCCCCII

1902

Copyright, 1902, by T. Y. Crowell & Co.

Published October, 1902

Composition and electrotype plates by
D. B. Updike, The Merrymount Press, Boston

THE LIBRARY
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
PROVO, UTAH

THE ELEGY OF FAITH

The Elegy of Faith



THE Christian heart responds to the beautiful lament of In Memoriam, because its meditations are universal in significance, its sorrow is not personal but racial. It is a world poem. It contains every string in the heart's harp, which Tennyson has swept with a true Shakespearian touch. Poetry is truth clothed and colored by the imagination. Great poems are not created but expressed through the imaginative faculty. Life is the creator of lasting literature, and as life is its inspiration, so is it its test and vindication. Life and literature are inseparable. They are one. Life is the judgment of letters. The common experiences of the race are constantly bringing fresh confirmations up to the great dramatic poems of Prometheus Bound, Job, Faust, and Hamlet, for the simple reason that these issue from the same life in which they find their response. Time never changes the fundamental qualities of human nature.

In Memoriam is Prometheus Bound, not omitting the last part of the great trilogy, the Prometheus Unbound. Instead of the lone rock jutting out from the Caucasus, we have an English home, with its tender associations. A college boy takes the place of the Titan. Instead of a mythical Hercules battling with the black eagles, In Memoriam is inspired by a living faith in a living Christ. It is the Job of English letters, an

The Elegy of Faith

example of profound suffering. Inexplicable grief puzzles the mind and disturbs the faith. It is the drama of the ash-heap repeated. As Job is a soul epic, so is *In Memoriam* an epic of the inner life. It is the Faust of England, in which the intellect goes forth in quest of some satisfying spiritual experience. It does not go in vain. Long is the search, but rich the reward. Up from the Inferno rises the soul to the Paradise. *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* are both crowded into these lines which throb with so much emotion.

Tennyson has the advantage of Æschylus, in that he lived in the light of revelation. He lived in a day of spiritual realities. He had the advantage of Job, who, in the pest-house of Uz, was compelled to listen to the false philosophy of his friends. Tennyson suffered within sound of church-bells and Christmas carols, and in the midst of vast spiritual forces and intellectual conflicts. *In Memoriam* was written during a brilliant contest between rationalism, evangelicism, and ecclesiasticism. A new era was dawning in science and religion. It was the day of Sir William Hamilton, Henry L. Mansel, and Herbert Spencer in philosophy, of the Brownings and Byron in poetry, of Matthew Arnold and Cardinal Newman in religion. The new science of the universe, a new idea of man, a breaking away from the traditionalism of the Middle Ages, together with a rising passion for humanity, led by such men as Newman and Maurice, mark the Tennyson era. Neither did the poem entirely escape the influence of ag-

nosticism, as taught by Professor Huxley and his school.

The Elegy of Faith

There are two voices in *In Memoriam*, — a voice of faith and a voice of doubt. They both speak with sincere certainty. It was not easy for Tennyson to believe. Perhaps it were better to say he was not credulous. Faith was won by conflict. One may see and feel the solemn surge of the sea in the progress of his thought. It is the picture of a struggle, a battle scene, in which the soul is the chief figure, the old problems of Æschylus are Job and Dante reset in a later age with English thought and scenery, as auxiliaries to the world battle between honest faith and honest doubt. When a man is engaged in the solemn business of thinking, he cannot very well escape doubt. To think is to doubt. Tennyson won his way to a rational recognition of Christian truth. His scepticism is that against life rather than organized religion. He raises and answers the questions propounded by every soul that suffers, and it is this which invests his verse with universal meaning. It is all men's poem.

In Memoriam is an elegy comparable with the sonnets of Shakespeare, Milton's *Lycidas*, and Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*. Shelley raises questions over the grave of Keats in his passionate *Adonais*, Matthew Arnold stirs the deepest emotions as we stand with him in Rugby Chapel at sunset, listening to the organ notes of his genius, pouring out a tribute to his father, and Ralph Waldo Emerson has given us the singularly touching *Threnody* on the death of his little son.

The Elegy of Faith

In Memoriam is to be ranked with these tender and immortal laments, which do not drop gall but sweetness, distilled from minds which have brewed sorrows. There are a few men who write for all men. Tennyson voices the common experience of suffering humanity. The tears in In Memoriam are our tears. The victory is our victory. We claim the doubts as our doubts, and we seize upon the faith as our faith. Tennyson had a simple, wholesome creed: "There is something which watches over us, and our individuality endures. That is my faith, and that is all my faith."

The poem is built upon a real experience of resignation, loneliness, and death. It is the common tragedy of love disturbed by circumstances. Death cuts the artery of love and it bleeds. Again we have the old story of friendship, which makes history beautiful and life worth living. It is a repetition of David and Jonathan. Arthur Hallam and Alfred Tennyson were bosom friends. The intellectual companionship and reciprocated affection brought them together by the laws of the higher magnetism. In college, among the mountains, in the city, and by the fireside, they were boon companions. Together they played and planned and travelled. The Christmas holidays were made increasingly holy by their consecrated affection. They knew and understood each other.

Young Hallam was engaged to Tennyson's sister, to whom he refers as "the lost light of

those dawned golden days." Both had promise of future greatness. Hallam starts with his father for the Tyrol, and sends a parting present to Emily Tennyson. He visits the mountains and picture galleries, where he finds a special interest in Titian and Rubens. On September 15, 1833, in Vienna, Mr. Hallam, returning from his daily walk, found Arthur, as he supposed, asleep upon a couch, but it was the sleep of death.

In Vienna's fatal walls
God's finger touch'd him, and he slept.

The father writes, "Those whose eyes must long be dim with tears, brought him home to rest among his kindred and in his own country." He was buried in Clevedon Church, round whose grassy slopes he played when a child, and from the graveyard of which, heard the music of the tide as it washed against the high cliffs, not a hundred yards away. The ever-restless waters described in another poem voice the griefs of Tennyson:

Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But oh for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!

The Elegy of Faith

But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.

Behind all the great vision of the poem is a stilled voice. The poet is looking for a vanished hand, a sorrow is the inspiration of its spiritual quest. The problem of pain is its theme. It contains the meditations of a mind which broods over its sorrows for seventeen long years. "It is meant to be a kind of Divina Commedia," says Tennyson, "ending with happiness. The sections were written at many different places, and as the facts of our intercourse came to my memory and suggested them. I did not write them with any idea of weaving them into a poem or for publication, until I found that I had written so many. The different moods of sorrow, as in a drama, are dramatically given, and my conviction that fear, doubts, and suffering will find answer and relief only through faith in a God of love" (Alfred Tennyson, a Memoir by his son, Vol. 1, page 304).

Theologically, the poem is rich with the consolations of a true doctrine of God. One sees the influence of Frederick Denison Maurice, Frederick W. Robertson, and Dean Farrar, and that school of liberal thinkers who have enjoyed the stilled thunder and emphasized the eternal love.

In philosophy the classification is more difficult. Perhaps the influence of Coleridge is more apparent. Certainly there is little of the pantheism of Spinoza which influenced the religious thinking of Goethe. Tennyson describes

the powerlessness of the human mind as it faces the sorrows of the world, and sets aside the human systems of thought, with the same ingenuity that Job repudiates his friends and listens to the voice of God. He takes refuge in the conscious permanence of love, and in the eternal goodness of God. From his dusty den, with the worm-eaten lore, Faust goes forth with Mephistopheles in quest of satisfaction. From his English home, filled with the memories of faith, Tennyson goes forth with devout faith in Jesus Christ. This is his declaration of faith:

Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,
By faith and faith alone, embrace,
Believing when we cannot prove.

Far off thou art, but ever nigh,
I have thee still, and I rejoice;
I prosper, circled with thy voice,
I shall not lose thee tho' I die.

Wonderful is the poet's faith in the permanence and immortality of love, wonderful is his belief in the immortality of Hallam's waiting soul, beautiful is his sublime trust in

That friend of mine who lives in God,
That God, which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.

The melodramatic action of the poem begins with tidings of Arthur Hallam's death, which was in September, 1833. It stunned the mate-

*The Elegy
of Faith*

rial forces and produced a spirit of almost morbid introspection. The return of the ship bearing the "loved remains" of his college friend is described in these well-known lines:

Fair ship, that from the Italian shore
Sailed the placid ocean-plains
With my lost Arthur's loved remains,
Spread thy full wings, and waft him o'er.

So draw him home to those that mourn
In vain; a favorable speed
Ruffle thy mirror'd mast, and lead
Thro' prosperous floods his holy urn.

All night no ruder air perplex
Thy sliding keel, till Phosphor, bright
As our pure love, thro' early light
Shall glimmer on the dewy decks.

Sphere all your lights around, above;
Sleep, gentle heavens, before the prow;
Sleep, gentle winds, as he sleeps now,
My friend, the brother of my love;

My Arthur, whom I shall not see
Till all my widow'd race be run;
Dear as the mother to the son,
More than my brothers are to me.

The morning of the funeral is described as

Calm is the morn without a sound,
Calm as to suit a calmer grief,
And only thro' the faded leaf

The chestnut pattering to the ground:

Calm on the seas, and silver sleep,
And waves that sway themselves in rest,

And dead calm in that noble breast
Which heaves but with the heaving deep.

*The Elegy
of Faith*

The evening of the dark autumnal day is
painted with this delicate touch:

To-night the winds begin to rise
And roar from yonder dropping day:
The last red leaf is whirl'd away,
The rooks are blown about the skies;
The forest crack'd, the waters curl'd,
The cattle huddled on the lea;
And wildly dash'd on tower and tree
The sunbeam strikes along the world.

His thought becomes reminiscent and roams
over the familiar paths

Which led by tracts that pleased us well,
Thro' four sweet years arose and fell,
From flower to flower, from snow to snow:
But where the path we walk'd began
To slant the fifth autumnal slope,
As we descended following Hope,
There sat the Shadow fear'd of man;
Who broke our fair companionship,
And spread his mantle dark and cold,
And wrapt thee formless in the fold,
And dull'd the murmur on thy lip,
And bore thee where I could not see
Nor follow, tho' I walk in haste,
And think, that somewhere in the waste
The Shadow sits and waits for me.

And before this chapter of his sorrow is closed,

*The Elegy
of Faith*

Tennyson rises to that true philosophy of life which makes *In Memoriam* a nobly sane and Christian poem:

I hold it true, whate'er befall;
I feel it, when I sorrow most;
'T is better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.

Three Christmas days are mentioned in the poem's cycle, causing its action to run through more than two and a half years. The festal days are used not only as the treasuries of rare and precious memories, but as predictions of the last and crowning cycle of the ages,

One far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.

The best authorities divide the poem into three cycles with prologue and epilogue. These represent a particular or personal sorrow, and increase to the universal or racial. They are called respectively cycles of the past, the present, and the future. With poem twenty-eight begins the first Christian reverie.

The time draws near the birth of Christ:
The moon is hid; the night is still;
The Christmas bells from hill to hill
Answer each other in the mist.

This year I slept and woke with pain,
I almost wish'd no more to wake,
And that my hold on life would break
Before I heard those bells again:

But they my troubled spirit rule,
For they controll'd me when a boy;

They bring me sorrow touch'd with joy,
The merry, merry bells of Yule.

*The Elegy
of Faith*

Moved by their memories, he returns to the
halls of Trinity.

With trembling fingers did we weave
The holly round the Christmas hearth;
A rainy cloud possess'd the earth,
And sadly fell our Christmas-eve.

At our old pastimes in the hall
We gambol'd, making vain pretence
Of gladness, with an awful sense
Of one mute shadow watching all.

Observe with what morbidness of mind Tennyson is pursued with this shadow of mystery. It follows his thought everywhere. It haunts his meditations and he is always conscious of its presence. This morbid doubt in the reality of the future, and in the final goal of ill, in contrast with the hope of the poem, makes *In Memoriam* a battle-field between the real and the unreal, and between faith and fear. It is full of great spiritual retreats, in which the soul of a sensitive man takes refuge. It is replete with charge after charge against darkness and doubt. Back from the regions of doubt, to the verities of the Gospel of Christ, the thought ever moves, driven like a storm-tossed bird. The mind wings its way to the sheltering splendors of God's truth. There is always a resting-place and spiritual refuge in the thought. Notice this appeal to the empty grave of Lazarus:

When Lazarus left his charnel-cave,
And home to Mary's house return'd,

*The Elegy
of Faith*

Was this demanded — if he yearn'd
To hear her weeping by his grave?

“Where wert thou, brother, those four days?”
There lives no record of reply,
Which telling what it is to die
Had surely added praise to praise.

From every house the neighbors met,
The streets were fill'd with joyful sound,
A solemn gladness even crown'd
The purple brows of Olivet.

Behold a man raised up by Christ!
The rest remaineth unreveal'd;
He told it not; or something seal'd
The lips of that Evangelist.

Tennyson, face to face with the problem of death, presents a picture of true spiritual repose. His faith equals his grief. He retreats to the argument of consciousness. He assails doubt with the implement of common sense. His heart argues when he says, that if death ends all,

'T were best at once to sink to peace,
Like birds the charming serpent draws,
To drop head-foremost in the jaws
Of vacant darkness and to cease.

The eternity of love is an anchor. His love is his logic; other things may fail, not love. This must endure. Love never dies. Through this spiritual sense he sweeps the future,

And we shall sit at endless feast,
Enjoying each, the other's good.

The doctrine of the heavenly reunion and recognition is here asserted with a beautiful trust. Tennyson has been called a spiritualist by some, who believe his meditations upon the possible nearness of the dead favor that belief. "Where is his friend Hallam? Where is the other world?" These questions are asked by all. He cannot know the other world through physical sight, but he feels it present through the spiritual senses. He believes his departed friend near, or at least has sufficient assurance of his possible contact with him to offer this beautiful prayer:

Be near me when the light is low,
When the blood creeps, and the nerves
prick
And tingle; and the heart is sick,
And all the wheels of Being slow.

Be near me when I fade away,
To point the term of human strife,
And on the low dark verge of life
The twilight of eternal day.

He does not for a moment surrender the personality of Hallam. He holds to that with a Christian's faith. Death, to Tennyson, is a rational evolution from the lower to the higher life. It is the beginning, not the end, of destiny. It is development, not destruction. Resurrection is not the climax of a long sleep, but the awakening at death. Resurrection takes place at the time of death. Here the sunset of the earthly life mingles its colors with the glorious lights of the sunrise of the heavenly life. "There

*The Elegy
of Faith*

is no death! What seems so is transition." Along the crags of his doubt this sun of faith strikes with real splendor. His sorrow is not despairing. He is not without hope. Here Prometheus is Bound, but not conquered. Here Job is punished, but not overthrown. Here is Gethsemane, but not without its strengthening angel. In Memoriam is a convincing and passionate defence of the immortality of the soul, it is an elegy of faith. In the darkness we hear the nightingale. Listen to its voice.

Oh yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;
That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroy'd,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete;
That not a worm is cloven in vain;
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shrivel'd in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain.
Behold, we know not anything;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last — far off — at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.
I falter where I firmly trod,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope thro' darkness up to God,

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.

*The Elegy
of Faith*

The next division opens with the second Christmas morning.

Again at Christmas did we weave
The holly round the Christmas hearth;
The silent snow possess'd the earth,
And calmly fell our Christmas-eve:

The yule-clog sparkled keen with frost,
No wing of wind the region swept,
But over all things brooding slept
The quiet sense of something lost.

From the seventy-ninth to the eighty-second poem, Tennyson states the ground of brotherhood between him and Hallam. He declares that they are one in kind "as moulded like in Nature's mint." The hill and wood and field printed the same sweet forms in either mind. The cool streamlet curl'd the same for each, and the whispers of the wind contained a common message to both,

But he was rich where I was poor,
And he supplied my want the more.

He means to honor his influence by perpetuating his good example. Tennyson's contemplation of death is notably Christian in its sanity and insight. He does not rail against the invasion of the enemy but accepts death's answer.

The Elegy
of Faith

But Death returns an answer sweet:
"My sudden frost was sudden gain,
And gave all ripeness to the grain,
It might have drawn from after-heat."

The only cause he finds for wreaking vengeance
on death is this:

He put our lives so far apart
We cannot hear each other speak.

But death interpreted his friend. It caused his virtues to appear as the lineaments of a face respond to the chemicals washing a photograph. Death rectifies our judgment. It gives perspective to our vision and discloses the good and true in life. There has been a corresponding quickening of friendship and allegiance. Death increases or shrivels love. Familiar scenes constantly recall the man associated with them; his name is caught up in familiar songs and old haunts re-echo with his steps. Landscapes are rich with the memories of his presence. He returns to Cambridge.

I past beside the reverend walls
In which of old I wore the gown;
I roved at random thro' the town,
And saw the tumult of the halls.

He hears again the high-built organs, the thunder-music shaking the portraits blazoned on the panes, catches the measured pulse of the rising wind among the willows, and pays a visit to the old rooms in which he dwelt. There is something inexpressibly sad in the return of the soul to its former haunts. The bird returns and finds

its nest broken and scattered. Time works its changes upon homes and shrines — all save love. It will be observed that mingling in all these reminiscences is the one thought of grief. It is the prayer for sight. The poet would see and feel and know.

Descend, and touch, and enter; hear
The wish too strong for words to name;
That in this blindness of the frame
My Ghost may feel that thine is near.

He alludes to his affection for the tomb, and calls,

“Arise, and get thee forth and seek
A friendship for the years to come.”

In relating this narrative of the soul, Tennyson, quite naturally, emphasizes the regret of separation and the intolerable sorrow of death. The heart of man has ever rebelled against the distance of death and has ever attempted to bridge the chasm. The Egyptians embalmed the dead, not only because they believed in physical resurrection, but that they might see, gruesome as a refined age might regard the desire, the faces of the dead. We reluctantly yield to nature the familiar forms, and though they are reduced to ashes, we place them in an urn and make the urn the symbol of the form or the reminder of the face we loved. One of the efforts of spiritualism is to seek communion with the other world. Spiritualism is a principle or supposed principle of spiritual communication. In the last analysis, it is the human heart trying to see and hear. Tennyson's grief turns upon this separation. He is

*The Elegy
of Faith*

ever trying to cut away the vast curtain hanging
between him and Hallam.

But when the heart is full of din,
And doubt before the portal waits,
They can but listen at the gates
And hear the household jar within.

It is a matter of interest to know that on one
occasion the poet claims to have met the spirit
of Hallam. The conviction grows out of an Eng-
lish lawn party, under the sky, over which had
drawn the silvery haze of summer.

Not a cricket chirr'd:
The brook alone far-off was heard,
And on the board the fluttering urn;
And bats went round in fragrant skies,
And wheel'd or lit the filmy shapes
That haunt the dusk, with ermine capes
And woolly breasts and beaded eyes;
While now we sang old songs that peal'd
From knoll to knoll, where, couch'd at ease,
The white kine glimmer'd, and the trees
Laid their dark arms about the field.

The poet finds himself alone, when a hunger
seizes his heart caused by the noble letters of
the dead which "like fallen leaves kept their
green."

So word by word, and line by line,
The dead man touch'd me from the past,
And all at once it seem'd at last
The living soul was flash'd on mine,

And mine in his was wound, and whirl'd
About empyreal heights of thought,
And came on that which is, and caught
The deep pulsations of the world.

During that night, the poet's soul, like every great soul, had an experience so real and yet so mystical, that poetry is exhausted in its expression. The heart of Paul was once raised high into the seventh heaven, and Moses, from the rocky cavern, saw the face of God.

Vague words! but ah, how hard to frame
In matter-moulded forms of speech,
Or ev'n for intellect to reach
Thro' memory that which I became.

With the dawning of the morning comes the climacteric of his "vision splendid." He looks out and cries:

"The dawn, the dawn," and died away;
And East and West, without a breath,
Mixt their dim lights, like life and death,
To broaden into boundless day.

Turning now from the cycle of introspection, the poet resigns himself to the future. The peal of bells rings out, the laurel, ungathered, is left, the holly stands, because

We live within the stranger's land,
And strangely falls our Christmas eve.

It is the Christmas of a vacant chair and a broken home. He faces the pain, but his love, leading him on like an armored knight, fights its way through the shadows of a personal doubt. There is always the power left in Tennyson to bury

The Elegy of Faith

out of sight the more dreadful aspects of the past, the gift of discrimination between worry and trouble, and the power to surrender to the passing years the inevitableness of his grief.

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

It is in such passages as this, so often repeated without a proper conception of their contextual meaning, that the Tennyson idea of life is found. In *Maud*, the whole poem is practically given to the development of this thought; namely, that we must not give ourselves to the bed of pain, but take up that bed and walk; that new tasks call us from old sorrows, and the new year moves us, or should move us, out from the imperfections and shadows of the old year.

In *Memoriam*, and indeed all the higher thought of Tennyson, contains the encouragement of a new call, the inspiration of a new duty, and the hope of a new year, that one way to get rid of old griefs is to accept new responsibilities. For example, the hero in *Maud* commits a murder, grows morbid, becomes insane, sinks into despair until he hears the thunder of Crimean guns, then arouses himself, wakes from his dream and becomes a soldier. The war of the Crimea saves him from the bitterness of a tragedy and the reflections of a disappointed love. As the year dies in the darkness and is laid away in the black grave of night, the dead past is expected to bury its dead.

Faust meets no hour to which he would say,
"Stay, thou art fair," until he sees the duty of service. It is this which makes him forget the past.

*The Elegy
of Faith*

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Observe how perfectly he applies this to his own sorrow and to the broader grief of mankind.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

The pendulum of Tennyson's thought now swings back to the sorrows of his personal loss, and in the meditations which follow we have one of those pure and splendid tributes of a true man to a great friend. Hallam's noble manners, gentleness of spirit, beautiful character, and the possibilities of his manhood are dwelt upon. He paints the picture of his possible future and speaks of him as

A potent voice of Parliament,
A pillar steadfast in the storm.

He pays a high tribute to knowledge as a moral force, and from this lofty plane of praise descends to the keen sense of his great loss.

O days and hours, your work is this,
To hold me from my proper place,
A little while from his embrace,
For fuller gain of after bliss:

*The Elegy
of Faith*

That out of distance might ensue
Desire of nearness doubly sweet;
And unto meeting when we meet,
Delight a hundred-fold accrue,

For every grain of sand that runs,
And every span of shade that steals,
And every kiss of toothed wheels,
And all the courses of the suns.

Looking back over the years of pain, Tennyson makes this significant remark, which denotes the return of that old and dreadful doubt:

I trust I have not wasted breath:
I think we are not wholly brain,
Magnetic mockeries; not in vain,
Like Paul with beasts, I fought with Death.

From this hint of doubt, the poet looks to God and compares himself with the crying child, and

Out of darkness came the hands
That reach thro' nature, moulding men.

He confesses that while there have been some bitter thoughts in his song, hope had never lost her youth, but looked only through dimmer eyes. Hope abides with him until he said "To seek them on the mystic deeps." Love is and was his Lord and King, a Sentinel that whispers in the deep night that "all is well."

In poem one hundred and twenty-nine, Tennyson asserts his faith again in the dear Heavenly Friend that cannot die.



IN Memoriam is a lament of love, but it is more than a lamentation of a broken heart. It is a message for the sceptic. Its scepticism is perfectly natural, the result of experience, which to the mind of the poet was inexplicable. There

is a mental passion in the poem which can only be understood by those who have doubted. It is not tragedy, though it contains the elements of a tragedy. It is a victory, not a defeat. The fine and noble reasoning of the poem is its chief characteristic. It may be interesting to compare it with one of Shakespeare's dramas, which in certain things is antithetical to In Memoriam, in others identical. The comparison will serve to distinguish the characteristics of each, and reveal the noble faith of In Memoriam.

Hamlet was of a poetical temperament, tender, sensitive, imaginative, responsive, whose mind was clouded and disordered by a grief,—the death of his father, King of Denmark. He loved his father with the devotion of a true son. The fact that his uncle was accused of killing his father, and afterwards wedded his mother, adds an additional thorn to the sorrow, which is wanting in the grief of Tennyson. That which interests us is the way Hamlet bears his trouble, or rather the manner in which he disposes of it. He is Shakespeare's real sceptic, and as Goethe put his own life into Faust, so has Shakespeare made Hamlet the vehicle of his doubts. Shakespeare's idea of life was inferior to Tennyson's.

*The Elegy
of Faith*

“We are such stuff
As dreams are made of, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.”

This is his idea of life:

“Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.”

Tennyson never stooped to such pessimism. Shakespeare makes Touchstone say, “The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool.”

He suspected the powers of the soul, the affections and passions of the heart.

“Most friendship is feigning,
Most loving mere folly.”

It is true that such expressions were but the darker shades in his immortal pictures, developing with more perfection the lighter colors of his truth, but they significantly show the author’s view of life. Every man contends with the world without and the world within; which is to say, he must resist the forces of his environment and the peculiarities of his intellect. Some men have the advantage of a certain mental poise and sanity, which serves them a good purpose. Mental characteristics are often instruments of power to help a man fight the battle of life, and on the contrary, they may handicap his nobler impulses. One weak faculty will block the progress of a dozen good motives.

So Goethe has described Hamlet by the familiar figure of the acorn planted in the vase, which ended in the expansion of the one and the destruction of the other. Hamlet's mind was overwhelmed with ideas and overburdened with unsolved problems. His reflections found no application and became as stagnant water. Thought must move like a stream, if it is to remain pure. It must find expression either in faith or action. In Hamlet it found expression in neither. His philosophical reflections were larger than his power of action. He had more ideas than he could use, and the effect was disastrous. He carried with him many unsolved problems, and their weight oppressed him. They threw ominous shadows across his mind. It is well for every sensitive and suspicious mind to have its questions answered as readily and as completely as possible. Unanswered questions tend to scepticism. Hamlet had a vivid imagination. The imaginative faculty is a delicate organ, as powerful as the telescope or microscopic lens. It sees, and writes, and paints. It is the faculty of color and vision; when developed to a great degree it becomes a source of danger. It is the cause of much misery or joy. Hamlet made the mistake of reasoning with his imagination and he was enticed on uncertain ground. He sought a conference with his father's ghost to determine by the testimony of his father's spirit the cause of his death. His imagination led him into spiritualism. Tennyson did not go so far in his attempts to reach the dead. While sitting alone reading the let-

The Elegy of Faith

ters of Hallam, Tennyson seems to discover the presence of his friend, and is conscious that a hand touches him from behind. Hamlet actually talks with his father's spirit. Both illustrate the force of powerful imagination, or at least a mental state that responds to the weird, the supernatural, and the remarkable. As there is a philosophical mind, so is there a spiritualistic mind, which finds satisfaction in spiritual phenomena. It is an unnatural or unhealthful state, full of unrest and unanswered longings. The ghost told him all he knew, but Hamlet did not trust the evidence, and with more reason attempted the well-known test of the play, with which he made an appeal to the conscience of his mother and his uncle. Hamlet was emotional and sensitive, with passions on the surface like unprotected nerves. Crowded into his life was a tragedy, a disgraceful marriage, the accidental killing of Polonius, banishment to England, and a love affair with Ophelia. These entered into his life with quick succession, so that the vase broke to give place to the growing acorn of remorse. This experience produced pessimism. Pessimism is the fatal gift of seeing the dark side of bright things, of turning the sweet into the bitter, the good into the bad, and of acquiring a cynical opinion of all things. The cynic is an intellectual unfortunate who regards the world bitterly.

In Tennyson there is honest doubt but not pessimism. Pessimism soon becomes chronic, when it is irrepressible and impossible to shake it off. Hamlet is Shakespeare's sceptic pessi-

mist. He carried into his experience what Rousseau and Schopenhauer and Hartmann have carried into philosophy. He felt that the world was against him,

“The heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world.”

The firmament fretted with golden fire he calls “a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors.” His pessimism is voiced in the declaration of despair.

“The time is out of joint: O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right!”

In contrast with these despondent moods which showed the young life of Hamlet, and through which he was unable with his doctrine of Fate to fight his way, is the trustful faith of Tennyson, which burst through his sorrows like the sun breaking through the clouds, covering the hills with light.

I falter where I firmly trod,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope thro' darkness up to God,

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.

In Memoriam resembles Hamlet in its introspection and philosophical inquiries into the mysteries of things, but it is as an elegy to the dead, where its relation is established between

The Elegy of Faith

a group of poems, such as Adonais, Lycidas, and Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard. The fact that death is the common cause of these laments, essentially relates them. They are at once tributes and interpretations, a voice of bereavement and a voice of confidence. Of these expressions of sorrow, Adonais is the most beautiful. Its rare beauty does not consist entirely in its expression and imagery, but in its sincere friendship.

Lycidas is a pastoral lamentation by Milton for the death of King expressed in the form of a phantasy of one shepherd for another, in which there is a careful representation of his friend's life. Tennyson deals with the facts of his intimacy with Arthur Hallam at first, and in Lycidas the strength of the poem is increased in proportion as the poet touches the actual facts of their companionship, as the following, which reminds us of In Memoriam:

“Together both, ere the high lawns appear'd
Under the opening eyelids of the Morn,
We drove afield, and both together heard
What time the gray-fly winds her sultry horn,
Batt'ning our flocks.”

Edward King and John Milton studied together in Cambridge, and their relation was more like that of Tennyson and Hallam than Shelley and Keats. During the vacation of 1637, between Chester Bay and Dublin, the vessel was wrecked, and among those who went down was young King. His body was never recovered.

“Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more,
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,

*The Elegy
of Faith*

.
Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear,
Compels me to disturb your season due:
For Lycidas is dead.”

Whatever may be said of the suggestiveness of these poems, *In Memoriam* ranks above them, not because of its elegiac power, but because of its interpretations of sorrow, and its brave, wholesome convictions upon immortality and love.

Adonais is more complete and passionate. It contains an almost vicious attack upon the critics of Keats, they who shot their darts at *Endymion*, which, so it is said, caused the death of the brilliant young author.

Shelley combines remorse with defiance, which, while it may not contribute dignity to the poem, certainly gives it color and passion.

In these poems we have a true intellectual companionship, a sincere and noble love of man for man. Indeed, one is impressed with the fact that friendship is the true object of the memorials.

Every student of Tennyson is familiar with the literary analogies made between *In Memoriam*, *Adonais*, and *Lycidas*. It may be helpful to make a closer acquaintance with *Adonais* in our efforts to understand *In Memoriam*. In the preface to the poem, the following note is made: “John Keats died at Rome, of consumption, in his twenty-fourth year, 1821; and was buried

The Elegy of Faith

in the romantic and lonely cemetery of the Protestants in that city, under the Pyramid which is the tomb of Cestius, and the mossy walls and towers, now mouldering and desolate, which formed the circuit of ancient Rome. The cemetery is an open space among the ruins, covered in winter with violets and daisies. It might make one in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place."

It is an interesting circumstance connecting Hallam with the Keats Elegy, that it was first printed in Pisa, under the direction of Byron, and a copy of the pamphlet was brought by Hallam from Italy.

Adonais opens with a mournful strain of real sorrow, and without the sublime imagery of faith in Tennyson's

Strong Son of God, immortal Love.

In the judgment of faith which sorrow compels, one easily distinguishes between the lofty trust of Tennyson, and the lower but not less sincere faith of Shelley, who voices his conviction in the sad line,

"Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at
our despair."

Shelley's thought rises and falls like the sea-waves. Much as the thought vacillates in *In Memoriam*, and immediately following the recognition of death's terrible supremacy, we have a thought like this, which adds sparkle and lustre to the poem:

“But his clear Sprite
Yet reigns o’er earth; the third among the sons
of light.”

*The Elegy
of Faith*

Shelley uses nature just as Tennyson has with even greater effect to describe and define the solitary grief:

“Morning sought
Her eastern watch-tower, and her hair un-
bound,
Wet with the tears which should adorn the
ground,
Dimmed the aerial eyes that kindle day;
Afar the melancholy thunder moaned,
Pale Ocean in unquiet slumber lay,
And the wild winds flew round, sobbing in
their dismay.”

The voiceless mountains are thought of as mourners, the amorous birds and horn and the bell at the close of day, the young spring and the dead leaves of autumn.

“The lorn nightingale
Mourns not her mate with such melodious pain;
Not so the eagle.”

The revolving year is likewise employed in the description of grief, and in this Tennyson resembles Shelley:

“Winter is come and gone,
But grief returns with the revolving year.”

In poem twenty-one, Shelley enlarges his thought from the personal into the universal when he asks:

*The Elegy
of Faith*

“Whence are we, and why are we? of what scene
The actors or spectators?”

The great unchanged law of nature, of life and
death, is disclosed and

“As long as skies are blue and fields are green,
Evening must usher night,”

month follow in the footsteps of month, and
follow it with woe, “and year wake year to
sorrow.”

From this universal thought of racial destiny
he comes back to his lost Keats and declares
that

“He will awake no more, oh, never more!”

But in the quick response to this hollow sea-
trough rises the thought of the resurrection,
shaping itself in the splendor of a crested wave
breaking on the shores of a larger hope.

“Roused Death: Death rose and smiled, and
met her vain caress.”

Hallam died in the morning of promise. So died
Keats. Both poets raise the why and wherefore
— questions asked of the younger dead of all
this mysterious world of life and death.

“O gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,
Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of
men

Too soon, and with weak hands though
mighty heart

Dare the unpastured dragon in his den?”

The lost friend is compared with the reptiles
which spawn and are “gathered into death

without a dawn." So in the world of men, a great mind awakes and soars forth and dies, leaving

*The Elegy
of Faith*

"To its kindred lamps the spirit's awful night."

Thus life is compared to a dying lamp, a falling shower, a breaking billow, and a withering flower. But

"The life can burn in blood, even while the heart may break."

In poem thirty-nine, Shelley gives expression to his pathetic confidence in the future of his friend in these familiar lines:

"Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—
He hath awakened from the dream of life."

In the next poem he goes on to say:

"He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure."

"He lives, he wakes,— 'tis Death is dead, not he;
Mourn not for Adonais."

Tennyson handles the great problems of life and death with a more personal touch than any poet. His soul was more responsive to the vital issues of life than Shelley. He was a greater man than Shelley; he dipped his brush in the same colors, but the picture which is left has bolder lines and more marked and commanding

The Elegy of Faith

figures. To change the figure, both touch the keys of the same instrument, but the Tennyson response is more soul-stirring and searching. Shelley pleases, Tennyson possesses, because his grasp upon the things which are true, his spiritual appreciation of matters of faith, is stronger. The music of Shelley is far away; that of Tennyson is near at hand, bringing to the heart the best of human thought and the clearest of spiritual vision. We are brought in touch with the profoundest issues, and sorrow is made specific, definite, and personal, and the fine poetic interest is in no sense destroyed.

In the list of laments it is highest and deepest because it is most Christian and philosophical. It ought to be said, however, that in the presence of death Shelley rises to a plane of faith and devotion calculated to contradict the charges against him as a secularist and man of uncertain convictions. Confessedly, he rises up to take his place with the great believers in the immortality of the soul and the life to come. With the broken lily at his feet, he appeals to the Dawn to turn its dew to splendor, the caverns and forests to cease their ominous moanings, and the flowers and fountains and air to dry their tears. To be sure, he makes Keats one with nature, in whose music, from the thunder's moan to the bird's song, is heard his voice. He is made a part of the loveliness of things. Calling the roll of the world's great souls, he makes us think of the roll-call of the dead in the Epistle to the Hebrews. He remembers the pyramid in Rome, standing like a pavilion

over the friend's dust, and then, with a mighty sweep of his imagination, reaches the hereafter of Christianity through which he sees

*The Elegy
of Faith*

“The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal
are.”



N Memoriam is essentially theological, that is, it boldly reasons upon those beliefs which men have called the verities. It deals with the future life, with the destiny of man, and man's world. The question of the future life is one of the most difficult and at the same time fascinating themes that engage the human mind. Says John Fiske, "The materialistic assumption that there is no such state of things and that the life of the soul accordingly ends with the life of the body, is perhaps the most colossal instance of baseless assumption that is known to the history of philosophy." We cannot scientifically demonstrate the immortality of the soul, but the soul accepts its own immortality, which is to say it is self-respecting and recognizes its fitness to live, hence its right to live. Immortality is more than continuous existence, an everlasting continuation of our present life. Immortality is endless existence plus a great moral purpose, which contains a true and rational theodicy. "From the first dawning of life, we see all things working together toward one mighty goal, the evolution of the most spiritual qualities which characterize humanity." Tennyson's love refused to acknowledge the end of love. It reasons out of the depths of our own consciousness, and this has always been the strongest defence of the immortality of the soul. It indicates a supreme faith in the reasonableness of God's way of doing things, and it

is the acceptance of this reasonableness that makes *In Memoriam* so comfortingly sane and noble. It is a wise conviction to be harbored by every sorrowed soul that God is good and wise, that all His works are works of wisdom.

Tennyson lifts his hands above materialism, and finds a personal God. Materialism extinguishes every light at the grave, darkens every death-chamber, shuts out the light and makes death end all. Materialism adds grief to pain and deepens the shadow of death. Theistic evolution, the only evolution worthy of the name, leads up to the glorious summits lighted with the fires of hope. Tennyson lays the foundation of all true comfort in a profound and unshaken belief in God. No man can be happy who does not believe in a personal God, and it is a question whether any intellect however brilliant has ever surrendered completely to the fallacy of atheism, because atheism is a philosophical contradiction and a moral impossibility. Even the pantheist and deist are at a disadvantage when attempting to explain the mystery of suffering and the philosophy of pain. It is here where Goethe parts company with Tennyson, between whose faith is the same distinction as there is between pantheism and theism. Tennyson believes in God, not as an unknown force, neither as ultimate reality, but as a personality, life, law, substance, end. He is "that God which ever lives and loves." Our life goes "From the great deep to the great deep." Against the cold and comfortless materialism of Locke and Spencer, he rebels and takes his place with Plato and

*The Elegy
of Faith*

Aristotle. Everywhere throughout the universe he saw the glory and greatness of God, and His Christ, "Strong Son of God," and in the restful consciousness of the over-ruling God, he writes :

Our little systems have their day ;
They have their day and cease to be :
They are but broken lights of Thee,
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.

Perhaps the most fascinating theme discussed in *In Memoriam* is the doctrine of immortality. Indeed, so prominent is this idea that to many readers *In Memoriam* is synonymous with immortality. It is noble in its vigorous faith in the future of man, who is not a spark struck out of the Divine fire, but an individuality, being and living, not only in endlessness, but in the strength and purpose of character. Immortality is the most personal fact in the programme of the future. Dogmatists group round the second coming of Christ the great events of the future, such as the resurrection, general judgment, heaven, hell, future rewards, and the destruction of the world. The New Testament Eschatology, according to the best interpreters, so outlines the doctrine of last things. Tennyson avoids any such programme and holds simply but surely to the destiny of love. He does not attempt a scientific demonstration of future existence, but paints the future of the soul in the language of love. To him, love is more than metaphysics; it is better than logic. He accepts with reverence the testimony of the Bible concerning the future of the soul, which is in

harmony with his own consciousness. Christ, not science, is his authority on immortality. He avoids the conventional argument of analogy, but believes with a reasoning and victorious faith that the soul lives in freedom in the other world. His allusion to Lazarus is tender and suggestive. Lazarus went out into the other world and, returning, gave no report of his sojourn, and if he did speak, the lips of the evangelist were sealed. He wishes that Lazarus might have brought back some message of relief.

The vital truth in immortality is not endlessness, but depth of life; not the revelation of eternal duration, but fitness to live forever. That which is of least importance is the element of time. The immortality of the soul is a spiritual experience rather than endless existence. Tennyson raises some doubts in this belief which lie outside the limits of scientific proof. For example, he asks if life is worth living provided there be no future destiny. It is interesting to compare what he says with the remark of Goethe, "Existence is a duty were it but for a moment." The poet answers the question in the negative and Goethe in the affirmative.

It will be seen in this study that the poet concerns himself, sometimes to the extent of morbidness, about the probability of communication in this life with the dead. It is, to say the least, an interesting study to inquire of the whereabouts of our dead. Where are they? In what land do they live? What shore have they reached? Where is the other world? Is it far or

*The Elegy
of Faith*

near? Down into the dark, deep sea of death he goes in search of the mystic cable binding the two worlds; up to the stony Bethel he goes to gain a glimpse of the ladder of Jacob, reaching to the stars, and to see the descending and ascending messengers of light. He never resorts to the commonplace of such questionable expedients known as clairvoyancy, slate-writing, and mediums. His medium is the soul. The great poem brings heaven very near to earth and multitudes of souls have found relief in his doctrine of the possible intercourse of spirits. His love assaults every principle of destruction. It persists in seeing. Sightless love is hell. To see and know and understand is satisfaction. In the higher interests of these triple blessings men have thrown their search-lights far out into the future. Whatever there may be unsatisfying in his conclusions as to the touch of souls here, and the communications of spirits, and whatever may be the disappointment in his effort to hear more than the echo of his own voice as he calls out in the night for his lost friend, he rests securely and with the faith of a great Christian upon the immortality of the soul and the recognition of saints in the other world.

Eternal form shall still divide
The eternal form from all beside,
And I shall see him when we meet.

The reconciliation of human pain with the goodness of God has never been accomplished except in the theory that "all things work to-

gether for good to them that love God." Job wrestled with this problem until God told him not to worry but to trust Him as the ruling and Almighty God of the universe. The marble block has ever cried out against the seemingly heartless and misunderstood chisel which carves it into immortal shape, and the discipline of education has always been contested. Men have never quite understood the discipline of God, forgetting that chastisement means to make chaste, that the gospel of trouble is the law of development, and that affliction works out for us an eternal weight of glory. Life's struggle goes on everywhere, even nature is a vast battle-field where the "type," at the expense of lesser forms of life, struggles for supremacy. To Tennyson, science is cold materialism without God. Evolution is God's way of making the most of the world. It is not only His way of making the world, but His way of bringing the world up to its highest uses. In the throes of progress there is suffering, vicarious sacrifice, but in the end every winter is changed to spring. The end of life is its justification. Out of the turmoil will at last come permanent good. The harvest reaped from the struggles of the world will be ripe and golden. The poet's doctrine of growth is not that of laziness, that all things will come out right of themselves. His God is the chief factor in evolution. He is a Christian theist, a theistic evolutionist. Pain and Providence will be reconciled by the vindication which shall come when all things are made known. It is this

The Elegy of Faith

The Elegy of Faith

sturdy hope which has led some to believe the poet a universalist or restorationist. He believes in the retribution of broken law, and, without using the language of sects or systems, hopes for the best. It is in harmony with his sensitive nature to hope for the salvation rather than the damnation of the world. He does not belong to the school of thinkers who are damnatory, and who will be forever unhappy unless they find the majority of mankind eternally miserable. It was Renan who said, "The path of the universe is shrouded in darkness but it goes toward God." The "altar-stairs" which "slope thro' darkness up to God," is the figure of the new theology, which sets in defiance the theology of the Middle Ages, the new being built out of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, as a powerful symbol of a rational idea of God. To progressive orthodoxy, Tennyson contributes the "larger hope," a phrase which has been used to denote the hypothesis of the future probation of those who in this life have not had an opportunity to be saved through Jesus Christ. The "larger hope," moreover, means more than this in Tennyson's mind. It is his best wish for the highest good of this world, his fair dream of the eternal mercy displayed in the ultimate redemption of mankind. It is not restorationism or universalism, but something immeasurably broader, — a deep desire for the ultimate glory and good of mankind.

I can but trust that good shall fall
At last — far off — at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.

The Elegy of Faith

In this poem, rich with Bible thought, we have “the climax in the poetry of search,” and what has the long search revealed? Out of the deep darkness of his personal sorrow, the poet brings to mankind a faith in God and love. In Christ as his manifestation and Saviour of the world, he brings in the faith which corresponds, with signal exactness, with the theory of evolution as presented by Romanes, Le Conte, and Drummond, — that God’s method in grace and in the material world is evolution; that man comes from God not as a fragment but as an individual, and as such goes to God; that the soul is immortal and we shall see and know and understand one another in the other world. He brings out of the deep despair of his sufferings the belief in the permanence of love and a strong and splendid faith in the final goal of ill. The mind of man holds to such faith, not alone because it is hopeful but because it is sensible. It contains the gospel for an age of doubt, a gospel for an age of sin, and surely a gospel for an age of grief. He gives them a theology without dogmatism, but more than this, his poem is a gospel for men who falter and fall and who stretch lame hands and gather dust and chaff. Into these lame hands Lord Tennyson places an imperishable inheritance of truth. It is this contribution to mankind which made Edgar Allan Poe call Tennyson the greatest poet that

*The Elegy
of Faith*

ever lived. It is this gift to men who struggle with themselves that brought together a most notable company of representative Englishmen and Americans in Westminster Abbey on the twelfth of October, 1892, when Lord Tennyson was laid in the Poet's Corner with the immortal singers. His words on Wellington may be applied to him:

And in the vast cathedral leave him.
God accept him, Christ receive him.

The poet establishes his theory of immortality by the synthesis of these appeals: that to life, to nature, and to God. In poems thirty-four and thirty-five is the first appeal to which he finds an answer in his own dim life. He opens the secret chambers of his own being and finds evidence for the future. He reasons in this way, that if some voice trusted by man

Should murmur from the narrow house,
that

“Man dies; nor is there hope in dust;”

Might I not say? “yet even here,
But for one hour, O Love, I strive
To keep so sweet a thing alive:”

But I should turn mine ears and hear

The moanings of the homeless sea,
The sound of streams that swift or slow
Draw down Æonian hills, and sow
The dust of continents to be;

And Love would answer with a sigh,
“The sound of that forgetful shore

Will change my sweetness more and more,
Half-dead to know that I shall die.”

*The Elegy
of Faith*

O me, what profits it to put
An idle case? If Death were seen
At first as Death, Love had not been,
Or been in narrowest working shut,
Mere fellowship of sluggish moods,
Or in his coarsest Satyr-shape
Had bruised the herb and crush'd the grape,
And bask'd and batten'd in the woods.

In poems fifty-four and fifty-six, Tennyson meets Browning in his optimistic universalism trusting in the restoration of every life and

That not one life shall be destroy'd,
Or cast as rubbish to the void.

It is the voice of God in the soul consciousness, a potent argument for immortality. From this testimony of God in human nature, the poet by a perfectly natural and logical process proceeds to the second appeal: God in nature, and the probable conflict between the two. The question raised is,

Are God and Nature then at strife?

Nature appears to be careless of the single life; the crushed being, the lost bird, the hooked fish, the destroyed herb, the agencies of destruction apparent in all the universe of life, are but testimonies of the careless indifference nature shows to the single life. Is this carelessness shared by God, who is love? Is God in battle with cruel nature?

The Elegy
of Faith

Of fifty seeds
She often brings but one to bear.

He argues that while the single life is unspared,
the type is kept.

“So careful of the type?” but no.
From scarp'd cliff and quarried stone
She cries “a thousand types are gone:
I care for nothing, all shall go.”

Man is the cherished and perpetuated type,
nature's last and crowning work. He with

Such splendid purpose in his eyes,
Who roll'd the psalm to wintry skies,
Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer.

He who trusted God, and believed love to be
creation's final law, despite the “red tooth of
Nature,” who shrieked against his creed —

Who loved, who suffer'd countless ills,
Who battled for the True, the Just —

Is he

Blown about the desert dust,
Or seal'd within the iron hills?

If so, then

O life as futile, then, as frail!
O for thy voice to soothe and bless!
What hope of answer, or redress?
Behind the veil, behind the veil.

In poem one hundred and eighteen, Tennyson
challenges the testimony of science, and claims

That life is not as idle ore,

But iron dug from central gloom,
And heated hot with burning fears,
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
And batter'd with the shocks of doom

To shape and use. Arise and fly
The reeling Faun, the sensual feast;
Move upward, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die.

In poem one hundred and twenty, he says:

Let Science prove we are, and then
What matters Science unto men,
At least to me?

He throws down the gauntlet at the feet of materialism and holds to the higher evidence of the higher life.

The third appeal is to God as a personal being. As he repudiates materialism, so with the same passionate regard for the personality of the man does he appeal to the individuality of God as against pantheism.

Love is and was my Lord and King.

And hear at times a sentinel
Who moves about from place to place,
And whispers to the worlds of space,
In the deep night, that all is well.

Tennyson trusts God, and believes that he will meet that friend who lives in God.

That God, which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.

The Elegy of Faith

Whatever interest may attach to the theology of *In Memoriam*, there is always to be recognized an example of suffering and a demonstration of a Christian's behavior in sorrow. The poet has left a legacy of sane behavior to the world, a right state of mind, a poise and balance as he faces the storm which sweeps over him. Therefore the poem ranks with the best devotional literature and becomes a household poem for the bereaved and broken-hearted.

Tennyson's mental condition might be summed up as follows: He suffered. Suffering is a gift. It were dreadful not to suffer. It is this capacity which, with its corresponding capacity to love, distinguishes the ox from the man. The fish is not as sensitive as the philosopher; the cow does not suffer like the poet, because the nature of the one is infinitely finer and higher strung than the other. The mind is the measure of sorrow and joy, and there is as much range in mind as there is between the tom-tom and the 'cello.

Tennyson suffered as only a noble, delicate spirit suffers, and the poem is filled with the weird music of his sorrow. He doubted, and because he doubted he is brought very close to the great natural human world. Everybody has his doubts about the past, the present, and the future. The ministers who ascend the pulpit and preach from the Bible doubt, and sometimes in unspoken wonder ask if it is all true. Men, otherwise strong in the faith and devoted to the highest ideals, come to the open grave and doubt. They sincerely question the immor-

tality of the soul and the destiny of the dead. *The Elegy
of Faith*

There is more scepticism by the coffin than the cradle. There is more doubt at the funeral than at the wedding. Men doubt the goodness of God in disaster, sudden deaths, and unexpected circumstances. These tragedies destroy or vitiate faith in God as the Ruler of the world and breed a cynical idea of life. In *Memoriam* is filled with questions which for seventeen long years were asked and answered. He trusted with a firm faith against a great darkness. Religion is not primarily a matter of the intellectual understanding, but of spiritual apprehension. The great things of religion are reasoned out by the heart, and there is a convincing logic in the dreams and longings, in the expectations of men. The poet believed in himself and respected the anticipations of his own soul. These were living prophets to whose voices he gave heed, and before whom he reverently recognized the testimony of the inner and higher man. The sceptical trend was thwarted by the power to believe in the invisible. When a man grasps the idea of his own individuality and the personality of God, he has gained a foundation which is not easily shaken. He has achieved the first triumphs in a belief in the fundamental tenets of revealed religion.

Tennyson believed in the reasonableness of things, in the recognition of saints, and in the reunion of friends. The heaven of *In Memoriam* is more beautiful than the heaven of Milton or Goethe. It is the rational future of the sensible Christian. We all have a hope of re-

The Elegy of Faith

union, and a sense of the incompleteness of this life, that it is not perfect but partial, and that in the world to come every cup will be full for the good, and we shall see each other again. What the great religious teachers of the Tennyson era taught in sermon and song, and what the Italian painters conceived in the colors of the canvas, Tennyson expressed in his poem, which, like ripe fruit, hangs upon the best religious thought of the nineteenth century.

Tennyson never leaves his reader in the intangible atmosphere of the hereafter. His poem is full of hard facts touching this present life and its questions. After all is said, we must admit that we live in one world at a time. When Thoreau lay dying in Concord, his friend Parker Pillsbury sat by his bedside, and he leaned over and took him by the hand, and said, "Henry, you are so near to the border now, can you see anything on the other side?" and Thoreau answered, "One world at a time, Parker." The Rev. Minot Savage, D. D., who furnishes this significant incident, comments as follows: "It has seemed to a great many that this answer is wisdom. I cannot so take it. The human race will never surrender this quest until, one way or the other, it is settled. We cannot take one world at a time." While it is a matter of great interest to the human mind to meditate upon the possibilities of the future, it remains true, however much we may chafe against the innumerable boundaries of our being, that we do live in one world at a time, and that our relation to the other world is one of an-

ticipation, prophecy, and longing: "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." We cannot dogmatically decide one question of eschatology, neither the second coming of Christ, nor the judgment, nor the resurrection from the dead, nor final awards or the consummation of all things. The writers of the New Testament believed in the return of Christ during the then generation, but He did not come. Since then, two main schools represent the hope of the second coming, the one holding to the belief that the world is gradually growing better, and will continue so to grow, until at the climax of development Christ will come. The other holds precisely the contrary, and teaches the increasing wickedness of the world, until at its summit of universal sin Christ will come and restore the world to Himself. The one pledges itself to the success of Christianity in men, and the other teaches the essential failure of revealed religion. There was a time when men taught that the body would be resurrected not only in its physical identity, but in its material essence; that the soul remained in an intermediate state, but would ultimately be brought forth to its natural tabernacle of resurrected dust. To-day, many believe that resurrection takes place at the time of death; that death is development, or evolution, the opening of the bud and the flower, the stream broadening out into the eternal river. So men believed in the distance of the other world; that it was located somewhere, far, far away, beyond the stars. To-day, — and Tennyson voices this belief, — many

*The Elegy
of Faith*

The Elegy of Faith

hold to the essential nearness of the other world to this. These contradictory and conflicting opinions confirm Paul's sensible agnosticism when he limits the human understanding in its possible power to know the unknown. What people need to cultivate is not so much a scientific knowledge of the hereafter, as a respectful and restful assurance in the natural longings of the soul. They will find more assurance in the soul's meditations than in the careful and discriminating analysis of the mind.

In Memoriam is the most notable collection of these meditations ever given to the world. They do not run in cut grooves after the fashion of the schools, but bubble up like sweet springs in life's desert, giving refreshment to all who seek help. They are the meditations of a life, the poems of a soul, clouded with pain and suffering under the stinging torture of unexplained disappointment.

In reviewing the contents of Tennyson's tribute to his young friend, it is apparent that we have been reading one of the great poems of the nineteenth century, great in literary execution, in the sweep of its thought, and in the power of its religious convictions.

The meditations of a sorrowed soul find their supreme vindication, too, in the life and death of Tennyson himself, who, at last, gathered together his own beliefs and crossed the bar when the sea was still.

The imperishable monument left by Tennyson to the memory of Arthur Hallam is so majestic in its proportions, and so complete in its literary

skill, that it ranks with the best expressions of the English-speaking world. In intellectual range it is not equal to Faust, which may be compared with St. Peter's in Rome, large in plan and splendid in finish and strength. In Memoriam is more like the Venetian St. Mark's, with its costly marbles and frescoes, its soft rich colors, its dim lights, and its more delicate and expressive architecture. The one is great in an icily regular outline, a piece of idealism, the other a tender heart-to-heart expression of devotional art.

*The Elegy
of Faith*

Faust differs from In Memoriam as Goethe does from Tennyson. The one was a restless idealist, the other a philosophical English doubter who finds the Rock of Ages. The continuous cry of the great German was "Mehr Licht"; Tennyson indulged himself in

Short swallow-flights of song, that dip
Their wings in tears, and skim away.

The figure of the sea reminds one that Tennyson found his spiritual philosophy and truest rest in Jesus Christ. He clings to Christ.

Follow you the Star that lights a desert path-
way, yours or mine,
Forward, till you see the highest Human Na-
ture is divine.

In the May Queen, he makes the dying girl say:

He taught me all the mercy, for he show'd me
all the sin,

*The Elegy
of Faith*

Now, tho' my lamp was lighted late, there's
One will let me in:
Nor would I now be well, mother, again, if that
could be,
For my desire is but to pass to Him that died
for me.

During these seventeen years he accepted Christ as his Pilot, and England has no brighter literary page in all the wonderful chapters of her annals than the death of Tennyson, at last vindicating his own faith, and demonstrating the spiritual assurance of this last great expression — an expression not only great as poetry, but still greater as religious faith.



*The Elegy
of Faith*

N concluding this study of In Memoriam, it remains for us to leave its atmosphere of mingled doubt and faith, with a passing consideration of the fundamental elements entering into its formation and development. What essential materials compose this imperishable monument raised over the grave of Arthur Hallam? In pointing out these characteristic materials, one is impressed with the wide range of a great mind, with the sweep and scope of a single experience; one is appalled by the fruits from a single seed of sorrow flung in the pathway of a Christian man. The multitude march by as men walk heedlessly through a forest, careless of how the trees and plants grow and indifferent to the classifications of the botanist. Now and then some strong mind challenges the root and the acorn and questions the tiny seed, and makes them tell their own story. Tennyson wrestles with the fact of death, — the old and storied fact dating back to the beginning of human history. He breaks open the urn of ashes, and seeks the mighty world it holds. He compels death to speak; he makes the grave vocal with its own thunder; he not only asks but answers questions. He boldly faces facts. The motive of this is friendship, the sincere respect one man has for another. The broad base of this literary monument is stainless friendship, whiter than the marble of Carrara. It is a friend rather than a scholar who

The Elegy of Faith

writes. It is the friend, who, going out into the forest for the lost, seeks with the sincerest patience. Scholarship must have a motive or impulse, else it is cold and lifeless. The scholarship of Tennyson was fired by the beauty of a wounded love. The next quality is that of spiritual courage to investigate untrammelled by theological systems, unrestrained by creeds, unchecked by doctrinal limitations, where he enters broadly upon this matter of the future life. He thinks only of himself and his friend; hence the poem reveals a brave single purpose which must demand respect.

In this monument is optimistic faith. It is splendid with positive belief in God as the Father of us all, in Christ as the manifestation of the Father, and in man as God's child. It registers a reaction against the limitations of the severe thought of the middle portion of the nineteenth century. It is the poem of the new theology. Tennyson believes that God is making the most of this world and that He is the eternal friend of humanity. It is the poem of the eternal love and the mercy that endureth forever; a rebuke to agnosticism, an answer to pessimism, a philosophy of sorrow, a panacea for bereavement, an expression of faith, a confidence in human destiny, a definition of death, a triumphant wrestling with doubts. In Memoriam is the best and completest statement of faith of the century.

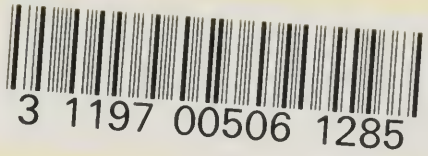
One is impressed with the fine and delicate use Tennyson makes of nature, in the imagery of In Memoriam. Nature's various moods are used

with artistic skill to express the moods of the soul. The scenery, to be sure, is English, but the moods of the English landscape are the moods of the Yosemite and the Alps. Nature is always and everywhere the same, and in this poem her lights and shadows are the vehicles of the soul's flights and longings, of the doubts and fears of the human mind. The red leaves of autumn, the snows of winter, the sea and shore, the summer evening, the English fogs, the twinkling stars, the storm and calm, are all used to express his own moods; and added to these are refined pictures of English life, the church and ringing bells, the English fireside, and the ever-restless search of the mind for the truth of things. All sounds are in it, ranging from the storm as it moves among the trees to the sweet marriage lays of festive joy and laughter, and following all a calm, clear light which falls from the eternal throne, making every grave luminous with its beauty, which makes us think of Wordsworth in its thought, of Keats in its art, and which elevates the name of Tennyson above that of Byron. It is the soul's song in the world's storm.

The Elegy of Faith

The End

akw a 5928
 Ed nel



DATE DUE

MAR 25 1980		
MAR 18 1980	MAR 21 1986	MAY 09 2007
	APR 04 1986	
	MAR 09 1986	
JAN 2 1984	DEC 18 1998	JUN 13 2003
FEB 2 1987		
APR 2 1988	DEC 14 1998	
	MAR 27 1999	
	APR 1 1993	
MAR 23 1985	DEC 21 2000	JUL 21 2003
	DEC 15 2000	
		JAN 05 2004
JUN 21 1986	APR 26 2001	DEC 15 2003
MAY 7 1988		
JUN 5 1985		
	APR 20 2000	
MAR 11 1998	DEC 10 2002	

